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STUDIES IN THE SOURCES OF THE SOCIAL REVOLT IN 1381¹

I-IV.

SOME valuable new sources of the history of the rising in 1381 have recently been published.² These, together with the much larger number of others already available, afford ample material for the solution of most of the important problems connected with that attempted revolution. It is the purpose of the following paper to show the need of a thorough revision of the generally accepted account of some of its best known events in the light of all published sources, the old as well as the new. The incidents selected are the two chief crises of the revolt, *viz.*, the conferences between the King and the insurgents at Mile End and Smithfield respectively. The investigation will include the consequences of these interviews, that is to say, the killing of Tyler, the chief leader, and the dispersal of the insurgents, and will involve a discussion of the two sets of demands granted them, showing conclusively the economic and religious character of the revolt.

¹ The usual title of the *Peasants' Rising* is rejected because the peasants were not the only factor of the movement. Among other factors were: the lower classes of the towns, in some cases the municipal governments; there was a general uprising of mesne towns and tenants against the monasteries and similar corporations. In general, it was an uprising of the lower classes against the upper, with a view to changing existing social conditions, and may be appropriately termed a *Social Revolt*.

The author desires to express his deep obligation to Professor John Matthews Manly, of the University of Chicago, for invaluable advice and assistance rendered in the preparation of these *Studies*.

² Powell, E., *The Rising in East Anglia in 1381*. Cambridge, 1896. Contains a good general sketch of the revolt in Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire, with the poll tax lists for 1381 for Suffolk, a valuable appendix of unpublished jury indictments, and an extract from a chronicle of Abbey St. Edmund's. The latter chronicle, together with other materials, will be found in the third vol. of *Annals or Memorials of St. Edmundsbury*, ed. Th. Arnold (Rolls Series). A very important chronicle among the sources is an extract "*Oute of an anominalle cronicle belonginge to the abbey of St. Maries in Yorke*," ed. G. M. Trevelyan, *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, XIII., 509-522, which was faithfully and extensively used by Stowe in his *Annales*. Another recent contribution is Réville, A., *Le Soulèvement des Travailleurs d'Angleterre en 1381* (Paris, 1898), containing, besides many Coram Rege rolls and ancient indictments, an account of the revolt in Herts, Suffolk and Norfolk, by the author, and an excellent general sketch of the movement by the editor, Charles Petit-Dutaillis. G. M. Trevelyan's *England in the Age of Wycliffe* contains a valuable chapter on the Peasant's Rising. Cf. also James Tait's article on Wat Tyler in *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, and the lately published *Patent Rolls*, 4 and 5 Richard II. Powell and Trevelyan have just published a small volume entitled *The Peasants' Rising and the Lollards*, containing, along with other matters, certain trials passed over by Réville, but used by Trevelyan.

The charming narrative of John Richard Green best embodies the traditional view of the meeting of the King and the people at Mile End:

"On the morning of the 14th therefore, Richard rode from the Tower to Mile End, to meet the Essex men. 'I am your king and lord, good people,' the boy began with the fearlessness which marked his bearing throughout the crisis, 'what will you?' 'We will that you free us forever,' shouted the peasants, 'us and our lands, and that we be never named nor held for serfs.' 'I grant it,' replied Richard; and he bade them go home, pledging himself at once to issue charters of freedom and amnesty. A shout of joy welcomed the promise. Throughout the day more than thirty clerks were busy writing letters of pardon and emancipation, and with these, the mass of the Essex men and the men of Hertfordshire withdrew quietly to their homes."¹

This extract is based entirely on Froissart, being simply an abbreviation of his narrative, which is too long to be here quoted in full. To the same source may be traced the description of this scene by other modern authorities in so far as they attempt to give details.

Let us examine the other contemporary chronicles recording this event. One of them, a fragment of a chronicle preserved by Stowe,² gives an even more detailed account than Froissart. In this source, however, the conference consists of an interview between the King and Wat Tyler, without any of the charming dialogue forming the basis of Froissart's account. Tyler presents a definite series of demands which the King grants in full, after which he retires to the Tower Royal, while the insurgents return to the city to carry out his grant to behead all traitors, wherever they may be found. The other contemporary chronicle in which the event is recorded, a reputed life of Richard II. by an unknown monk of Evesham,³ varies even more from the account of Froissart. It represents the boy King as being summoned to Mile End under threats of death, and riding timidly to the place of meeting. "Like a lamb among wolves seemed he, as one in great dread of his life, and meekly he entreated the people standing about."⁴ The proceedings consisted of an interview between leaders delegated by the insurgents and the King, who was only too glad to grant whatever they demanded and obtain their permission to retire.

No other contemporary chronicles or public documents contain mention of the King's reputed bravery at Mile End, although the demands he granted are elsewhere recorded. Froissart is the sole authority for this attitude. This lack of confirmation speaks against

¹ Green, *Hist. English People*, I. 473. His source is Froissart, IX. 404-406.

² Eng. Hist. Rev., XIII. 517 ff.

³ *Historia Vitae et Regni Ricardi II, Angliae Regis, a Monacho quodam de Evesham consignata*, ed. Th. Hearnius, Oxoniae, 1729.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 21-28.

the incident as recorded by Froissart, and its contradiction by two contemporary sources certainly make necessary a careful investigation. This has not been attempted by the latest modern authorities.¹ As Froissart has furnished the basis of this traditional account of the meeting at Mile End, as well as, in great part, of the death of Tyler at Smithfield, and indeed, of other important incidents of the revolt, we shall begin these studies with an investigation of the value of his *Chronicles* as a source of history.

I. THE CREDIBILITY OF FROISSART.²

The *Chronicles* of Sir John Froissart are a sort of compendium of European history of his own times³ and those immediately preceding, grouped about the central theme of the wars between England and France in the fourteenth century.⁴ They are divided into four books, of which we are mainly concerned with the second extending from 1378 till 1385, although the conclusions reached will apply in a measure to the whole work.

Even during Froissart's lifetime the work was so popular as to require several editions. There is, however, no considerable diversity of text in the editions of that part of Book II. concerned with the revolt in 1381.⁵ The citations of this article will be in the main

¹ Petit-Dutaillis, in Réville, *Soulèvement*, vii., viii.; Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliffe*, 234–235.

² Much has been written on Froissart as a historian, but it is of a general nature and throws little light on his value as a source of history: Kervyn, I. Pt. II., Ch. 30; Luce, I. CVII., CXXVI.; Darmesteter, Ch. 23.

³ The materials for the life of Froissart are to be found chiefly in his two poems, *L'Espinette Amoureuse* and *Le Joli Buisson de Jonece* (Scheler's edition), in stray notices of the *Chronicles* and in records published mainly by Pinchart, *La Cour de Jeanne et de Wenceslas*. Suffice it here to say that he was born in 1337, devoted most of his life to poetry and history, and died in the early 15th century, possibly in 1410. The reader is especially referred to Kervyn's edition of the *Chronicles*, I. Pt. I., for the most complete modern biography. Cf. also Introduction to Scheler's edition of the poems; Paulin Paris vs. Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Bulletin du Bibliophile*, XIV. 851–875; 1237 ff.; 1249 ff.; 1316 ff., 1350. An excellent brief sketch of part of his life is given by Professor G. L. Kittredge, "Chaucer and Froissart" in Kölbing's *Englische Studien*, XXVI. 325–327. Brief accounts will also be found in the French literary histories of Aubertin and Petit de Julleville, as well as in Buchon's first edition of Froissart (by de la Curne de St. Palaye), and in Johnes's translation. Mme. Darmesteter's popular biography (translated by Miss E. Frances Poynter, N. Y., 1895) and two articles by G. B. Macauley in *Macmillan's* (1895, I. 223–230, 194–200) are interesting reading, but hardly scientific.

⁴ His own title was *Chroniques de France, d'Engleterre, d'Escoce, de Bretaigne, d'Espagne, d'Italie, de Flandres et d'Alemaigne*.

⁵ According to Kervyn there are three editions of Book II. extant, of which he prefers the third, based on a MS. belonging to the University of Leyden; *Chroniques*, ed. Kervyn, I. Pt. II., 104 ff., 141–142, 363–381. From certain additional matter given in Johnes's translation, it would seem that there was a fourth edition now lost. *Ibid.*, 373–381.

to the excellent modern edition of Baron Kervyn de Lettenhove, the most detailed and as yet the only completed edition.¹ English quotations will be given where practicable in the quaint language of Lord Berners's translation,² which best reproduces the flavor of the original.

Few chroniclers of the Middle Age were better qualified for historical work than Froissart. His mental faculties, naturally vigorous, were improved by a school education extending well-nigh to his twentieth year,³ and by a practical training in association with men of affairs which it was impossible for the usual chronicler, a cloistered monk, to enjoy. He added to these a talent for facile expression which has made his *Chronicles* one of the classics of Middle French literature.

Few chroniclers made more diligent and honest preparation for their work than did Froissart, according to the light he possessed. For with him it was indeed a lifework. At the age of twenty he began an historical account of the battle of Poitiers which he presented to his countrywoman Isabella of Hainault, wife of Edward III.⁴ During the five years of his sojourn at the English court as clerk of the Queen's chamber, he constantly found time, amidst other duties, to obtain information from the warriors and statesmen with whom he came in contact. Diplomatic missions on which he was sent, even to distant countries, furthered his historical preparation.⁵ For even then he was recognized as one preparing for important historical work, and was given many facilities of information.⁶ This was much more the case after the appearance of the first Book of his *Chronicles*. In the long journeys which he was then enabled to take for the sole purpose of obtaining historical information,⁷ he

¹ Brussels, 1870-1872, for the Royal Academy of Belgium, 25 vols., 15 of the text, 10 of various aids to the study. With painstaking researches on all the MSS., the various editions being published in full. Another good modern edition is that for the Société de l'Histoire de France, begun in 1869 by Siméon Luce and continued since his death by M. Gaston Raynaud. J. A. C. Buchon's editions of Froissart in modern orthography are antiquated.

² First published 1523-1525, reprinted 1812. Thomas Johnes's translation. (Hafod, 1802-1805, repr. 1874) is fairly accurate, though why authorities like Stubbs and Trevelyan should cite it in preference to the original French, I fail to see.

³ *Chroniques*, XIV. 2. Cf. the charming account of his youthful education in *L'Espinette Amoureuse* (ed. Scheler), I. 251 ff.

⁴ *Chroniques*, II. 5.

⁵ He thus traveled in Scotland (*ibid.*, II. 137-138; V. 133; XIII. 219, 256), Aquitaine (XVI. 234; XV. 142), and in Italy as far as Rome (*Joli Buisson de Jonece*, 341-347; *Dit du Florin*, 221-223), besides other countries.

⁶ For example, at the birth of Richard II. at Bordeaux, the marshall of the Prince of Wales for Aquitaine bade Froissart record the event, furnishing him with the necessary details. XVI. 234.

⁷ E. g., his famous journey to Béarn, his second journey to Brittany, and others. *Oeuvres*, ed. Kervyn, I. Pt. II., Chs. 22-23, 25-27.

was received by the powerful of different countries in a manner which leaves no doubt of their opinion of his historical work.¹

He has himself very prettily described these painstaking preparations :

“ Much pains and labor did I have with my work, in many ways ; so much so that I could never have compiled or finished it except by the labor of my head or the sacrifice of my body.”²

Other passages tell of his love for the work and his resolve to devote his life to it :

“ As long as I live, by the grace of God I shall continue it ; for the more I follow it and labor thereon, the more it pleases me. Even as a gentle knight or esquire who loves arms, while preserving and continuing develops himself therein, thus do I, laboring and striving with this matter, improve and delight myself.”³

He wrote not for his contemporaries alone, but for ages to come ; like Thucydides he knew that his book would be *κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί* :

“ For well I know that when I am dead and gone this noble and high history will be in great demand, and all noble and valiant men will take pleasure in it, thereby increasing their good deeds.”⁴

Let us now examine more closely this method of acquiring information and its effects on the historical value of his chronicles. This was almost entirely by means of the interview. Now he certainly had excellent opportunities at the courts and castles of the great men with whom he stayed.⁵ Still it was not always that he could see important actors and obtain information from them or even from well-informed authorities on the many events he describes. As his ready credulity did not usually permit him to weigh carefully the historical value of the evidence offered, his narrative is reliable or unreliable according to the character of the informant.⁶ Nor does he often attempt to increase his knowledge by the study of documents ; these he rarely incorporated in his chronicles, which therefore lack the precision of detail given by such studies.

It is especially important for our purposes to determine the character of Froissart's source of information on the revolt in 1381. According to M. Kervyn de Lettenhove this was no other than

¹ Cf. his reception by Gaston de Foix, and the latter's comments on his history—*ibid.*, XI. 3-4—by the seigneur de Coucy, together with the latter's invitation. XIV. 3-4.

² *Ibid.* II., 2. “ Moult de paine et de travail en euch en pluseurs manieres, anchois que je l'eusse compile ne accompli, tant que de le labeur de ma teste e de l'essil de mon corps.”

³ *Ibid.*, XIV. 3. This and the following passage are not contained in Berners's translation.

⁴ *Ibid.*, XI. 2.

⁵ For instance, at the court of Edward III., of Wenceslas, Duke of Brabant and Luxemburg, or of Gaston de Foix, Count of Béarn.

⁶ Cf. the absurd tales related to him by Espaing de Lyon, which he records in all earnestness. XI. 22 ff.

Robert de Namur, Lord of Beaufort and Chièvres in Hainault, a patron to whom Froissart dedicated an edition of the first book of his *Chronicles*.¹ He was at the court of Richard II. during the revolt, and therefore an eye-witness of some of the most important events. Let us examine the arguments for this hypothesis.

It consists of traces of Robert's influence on Book II., the first indication of which is found in the account of the actions of the sire de Bournazel, French ambassador to Scotland, in Flanders.² The latter does not appear in a favorable light, whence M. Kervyn assumes a hostility to the French on the part of Froissart, and consequently the influence of Robert de Namur, who was a devout English partizan. But this is assigning very little consequence to Froissart's impartiality, of which the editor elsewhere thinks so highly.³ To detect the hand of a particular individual in an instance which at best could be ascribed to one of his political party, of which the chronicler knew many representatives, is hardly warranted. The incident could be of no more than confirmative value for more positive evidence.

Further traces of the same influence are found in two references to Robert in Book II. Under the year 1380 it is briefly recorded that he came with his men-at-arms to aid the Count of Flanders at the siege of Ghent,⁴ and in 1382, after a long description of the progress of Anne of Bohemia, Richard II.'s intended wife, from her home to England, we are informed in a few words that Sir Robert escorted her from Utrecht to London, for which the English King and barons bore him great gratitude.⁵ But both of these notices are no more than commensurate with the importance of his part of the action described; they might have been recorded of any other individual rendering the same services. If we compare them with the notices of Robert in that edition of the first book, which he no doubt inspired, or with those of Guy de Blois in the second book, of which he was patron,⁶ we shall see that Froissart was more generous in his notices of the achievements of his patrons.

¹ *Ibid.*, II. 5. Cf. I. Pt. I., 99-100.

² It is related how while waiting for favorable winds at l'Écluse he put on almost royal state. For this and his neglect to pay respects to the Count of Flanders he is summoned into the latter's presence, and is very roughly spoken to by him and the Duke of Brittany. This he does not dare resent, being in their power. *Chroniques*, IX. 123 ff.

³ *Ibid.*, I. Pt. I., 487 ff.

⁴ "La vint messires Robert de Namur servir le conte a une quantite de gens d'armes, enssi que il estoit escris et mandes." IX. 349.

⁵ "Et toudis fu en sa compaignie, depuis que elle vint a Trec en Alemaigne, chils gentils et loyaux chevaliers, messires Robert de Namur, jusque a tant que elle fu espousee, de quoi li rois d'engletierre et li baron li seurent grant gret." IX. 462.

⁶ The editor has himself collected and compared the former passages. I. Pt. II., Ch. 5. For the latter see X. 181-182, 242, 245.

The most important proof of influence of Robert de Namur that M. Kervyn has introduced is, to my mind, the detailed and circumstantial character of Froissart's account of the revolt in 1381, which we know Robert witnessed. Still the fullness of an account does not of itself show the influence of a well-informed eye-witness. There should be other confirmatory circumstances, as, for example, accuracy. This, as in the following studies we shall have abundant cause to see, is almost entirely lacking. More than this, the account contains a number of errors which an eye-witness could not have made. Robert de Namur, who according to Froissart accompanied the King to Mile End, would not have related that the Queen-mother remained in the Tower and was insulted by the insurgents, when it is evident from contemporary documents that she too was with the King.¹ How could a man who must have seen Tyler and the other insurgent leaders at Mile End have said that they were at this time engaged in plundering the Tower and murdering the Archbishop?² Nor would one who was present at the audience of the rebel envoy with the King, have confused the insurgent with Sir John Newton, royal ambassador to the insurgents.³ Moreover, the two notices of Robert which Froissart gives in his account of the revolt are not such as we usually find him giving of an informant. He would probably have recognized his patron's devotion and services more than by merely enumerating him among those who were with the King in the Tower and those who accompanied the King to Mile End.⁴

It is also to be added that M. Kervyn's hypothesis is somewhat at variance with his researches on the time of composition of Book II. For while he assumes this to have been in 1387–1388, he believes that Froissart did not come under the influence of Robert de Namur until 1390–1392.⁵ He must certainly suppose, however, that the chronicler obtained his information on the second book between the years it covers, 1378–1385, and the time of its composition. Let us see whether this is likely.

To be quite exact, the date of the composition of Book II. may have been a trifle earlier than 1387. Its limits are fixed by two passages in Froissart's work. In the account of the birth of Catherine of France in 1378 he tells us that she afterwards became

¹ *Ibid.*, IX. 404, vs. Riley, *Memorials of London*, 449; *Eng. Hist. Review*, XIII. 517.

² *Chroniques*, IX. 403, vs. *Eng. Hist. Review*, Riley, as above.

³ See below, 18, n. 1.

⁴ *Chroniques*, IX. 395, 405. Cf. the notices cited in the fourth note preceding : *Chroniques*, XIII. 18.

⁵ *Ibid.*. I. Pt. II., 104 ff., 141–142, 42–49, 124–125; I. 281.

Duchess of Berry ; now she was married to Jean de Berry in 1386.¹ We also know that Book II. was completed before his journey to Béarn, where he arrived at Orthez on 25 November, 1388.² Book II. was therefore written after 1386, and before the autumn of 1388. But all the evidence in our possession goes to show that during this period Froissart lived with Guy, Count of Blois, whose chaplain and historian he was. His description of the progress of the latter from Blois to Bourges, in August, 1386, when on the road to his son's nuptials, seems that of an eye-witness. In July, 1388, he was also at Blois when the Duke of Berry asked for the hand of Lancaster's daughter ;³ from here he started in 1388 on his Journey to Bearn.⁴ The tone of Book II. is that of the French party, to which Guy belonged, while Robert de Namur was an adherent of England. Finally, the character of the references to Guy in the second book establishes the fact that he was the patron.⁵

It is of course not impossible that Froissart saw Robert de Namur between 1381 and 1386. We know that he constantly tried to keep informed on passing events ; indeed, he tells us that his information on the revolt was contemporaneously acquired.⁶ But in this case the burden of proof rests with those who would maintain that Robert gave him this information. The probability certainly is that he was under the same influence from 1381 to 1386 as in 1386–1388. For as early as 1373 he received the cure of Lestinnes, which was under the patronage of Guy de Blois,⁷ and afterwards gave it up only to accept the more profitable benefice of Chimay from the same patron, and to become his chaplain. No date is recorded for this promotion which brought him into more intimate relations with Guy ; but we know that Froissart remained his chaplain until the Count's death, 12 December, 1397.⁸ And while it is impossible to establish with absolute certainty just when Froissart

¹ IX. 44. Cf. III. 82.

² *Chroniques*, XI. 3. This was St. Catherine's day. Cf. *ibid.*, 1–2, where he tells us that he had finished recounting the events in Flanders and Picardy before his journey south and before relating the wars in the south. Now these events in Picardy and Flanders are recounted at the close of the second book.

³ *Chroniques*, XIII. 81–82. Froissart also wrote a pastorelle describing this marriage.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 112. This event occurred in 1388, as Kervyn recognizes (I. Pt. I., 315) ; yet on another occasion, he concludes from the same passage that Froissart was on the banks of the Loire in 1387. I. Pt. II., 109.

⁵ This is admitted by Kervyn himself. I. Pt. II., 109.

⁶ “J'en parleray et le remonstreray selonc ce que dou fait de le incidensse j'en fuy adont infourmes.” *Ibid.*, 387.

⁷ *Chroniques*, ed. Luce, I. liv., vi.

⁸ Kervyn, XVI. 70, 279.

was under the patronage of Robert de Namur, the indications are that this was before his relations with Guy de Blois.¹

Neither from the chronological probabilities of the case, therefore, nor from the character of Book II., is it likely that it was written under the influence of Robert de Namur. The character of the account of the revolt in 1381 certainly indicates that it could not possibly have been derived from this nobleman, who was an eye-witness of the event.

From what has been already said it is apparent that Book II. was not written contemporaneously with events,—a fact which holds good for most of Froissart's work, and this fact is of importance in estimating its historical value. This is further proved by two passages in his account of the revolt. One of these has already been cited;² in the other he speaks of the punishment of three rebel aldermen of London which did not occur till at least a year and a half after the rebellion.³ He seems to have kept record of the information he was constantly acquiring in notes or some similar record.⁴ By the time he came to write, his conceptions, though possibly improved by additional information and criticism, were much influenced by certain moral and rhetorical purposes which we shall now proceed to examine.

His moral purpose which, singular to say, has not been hitherto noticed, is thus announced at the beginning of the well-known first edition :

"To thentent that the honorable and noble adventures of featis of armes, done and achyued by ye warres of Frâce and Inglande, shulde notably be inregistered, and put in perpetuall memory, whereby the prewe and hardy may have ensample to incourage them in theyr well doyng, I, syr John Froissart, wyll treat and recorde an hystory of great louage and praise."⁵

¹ The researches of Siméon Luce, which have appeared since Kervyn's make a satisfactory showing to the effect that this was between 1369, when Queen Philippa, Robert's sister-in-law, died, and 1373, when Froissart became curé of Lestinnes. During this time the book dedicated to this patron was written. *Chroniques*, ed. Luce, I. vii., ix., xx.—xxvii.

² Note the words "j'en fuy adont infourmes" in the citation just quoted.

³ *Chroniques*, IX. 402. "Li IX estoient pour ly et pour le roy, sicom il le monstrent, et ly troy de la sect de ce mescheant peuple, sicom il fu puissedi sceu et cogneu, dont il le comparent moult chierement." The three were not called to account till the Parliament of October, 1382; in November they were convicted and excepted from the general pardon. *Rot. Parl.*, III. 139; Rymer, *Foedera*, IV. 156; Réville, *Soulèvement*, 190 ff., 198.

⁴ Speaking of information acquired on his journey to Béarn he remarks: "Je les mettoie par escript . . . pour en avoir plus fresche memoire ou temps avenir." *Chroniques*, XI. 74. The marshall of Aquitaine thus bade him record the birth of the Prince of Wales: "Froissart, escripes et mettes es memoire," etc. *Ibid.*, XVI. 234.

⁵ Berners, I. 1; Kervyn, I. 4. The above translation is not literal, but gives the full sense of the original.

He writes "pour tous noble cuers encouragier et eux monstrarre example et matiere d'onneur," his greatest hope for the future being that from his work all noble and valiant men might take pleasure and encouragement in well doing.¹ His design, therefore, was not to write history as we understand it but to furnish brave knights with a good example. The effect of this tendency is not usually promotive of historic truth. It often causes Froissart to idealize the action and characters of his knights, nobles and kings in a manner not consistent with the actual state of affairs.²

He has announced his moral purpose in describing the revolt in the opening remarks on the subject: "Che fu une merveilleuse cose et de poure fondation, dont ceste *pestillensse* commencha en Engletierre ; et *pour donner example a toutes manieres de bonnes gens*, j'en parleray."³ His purpose was here to furnish a warning example to all good people, to show the sin and folly of such rebellion, and to reveal in the heroism of the civic and rural nobility, and especially of the young King, a shining example for imitation. With such an end in view he could hardly be fair to the rebels.

Froissart's rhetorical purpose must likewise be remembered in passing on the credibility of his work. It must be remembered that he was a poet, who occupies quite a place in French literature.⁴ Indeed, his *Chronicles* are of a poetic character and may be fitly termed a poem in prose, for they are garnished with touches which only a poet could invent. They are like an old French romance, save that they are in prose instead of verse, and record actual rather than mythical events; the moral purpose of exhorting to knightly virtues is in each case the same. To this poetic tendency Froissart owes much of the beauty of his style, its charm and grace, its freshness and naivety. But on the other hand his historical trustworthiness is naturally impaired in consequence. Facts are distorted to produce a fine narrative, while touches purely poetic are added without the requisite foundation of truth. Incidents that he thinks probably occurred are often invented.

Froissart's well-known love and admiration for the chivalry of the 14th century, however valuable they make him as a historian of the culture of the upper classes and his work as a manual of chivalry, have disastrously affected his account of the revolt. The

¹ Kervyn, II. 5; XI. 2.

² Cf. his idealization of the actions of Sir Robert de Salle. See below; of Richard II. in the fourth and fifth papers of this series.

³ *Ibid.*, IX. 386-387.

⁴ For Froissart's literary value of Kervyn, I. Pt. I., Ch. 30; Luce, I. Introd. Ch. 3; Aubertin, *Hist. de la Littérature Française au Moyen Age*, II. Ch. 3; Petit de Julleville, *Hist. de la Langue et de la Lit. Franç.*, II. 316-322.

burgher's son of Valenciennes indeed has appreciation for the struggles of the communes of Flanders; but in general the upper classes alone awake his sympathy. His reputed impartiality is only for those engaged in what he considers legitimate warfare, and never extends to rebellious peasants like the Jacques Bonhommes in France and the English commons of 1381; he has no sympathy for their aspirations. His introductory remarks on the revolt just quoted are characteristic; it is for him a "*pestillensse*," of strange cause and poor foundation; the people are fools, who rebel because they are too prosperous and do not know what they want, under leaders who are rogues and scalawags.¹ Listen to his estimate of the relative worth of the classes in England: "Li gentilhomme sont de noble et loial condition et li communs peuples est de fele, perilleas, orgueilleuse et desloiale condition."²

The effect of Froissart's idealization of knighthood, of his moral purpose in describing the revolt, and of his rhetorical propensities may best be studied in some characteristic part of his narrative. A good instance will be found in the charming story of the death of Sir Robert de Salle at the hands of the rebels before Norwich. On Corpus Christi day Sir Robert is summoned to a parley by a great rout of commons from Lynn, Bedford, Cambridge and Yarmouth marching on London under command of a rascal named "Listier." He comes, but in a pretty dialogue refuses the offer to become their leader and ruler of a fourth part of England. They therefore attack him, and he, after prodigious feats of valor, one against thousands, is hacked to pieces.³

Although this story bristles with errors,⁴ it merits consideration from having been accepted, among others, by no less an authority than Mr. Powell.⁵ Contemporary jury indictments, however, and the municipal rolls of Norwich give a different picture of these

¹ *Chroniques*, ed. Kervyn, IX. 386, 405, 406.

² *Ibid.*, II. 17. While this comment was written under the impression made by the deposition of Richard II., it also expresses his opinion of the rebels in 1381.

³ *Chroniques*, ed. Kervyn, IX. 407-409. Cf. the quaint translation of the speeches by Berners, I. 648.

⁴ It is well known that the commons of Bedford and Cambridge did not participate in the Norfolk revolt, but were engaged in separate revolts at home. Neither they nor the insurgents of Norfolk advanced *en masse* on London, and had they done so, Norwich lay far to the east of their route. Listere was captain of Norfolk only and remained there throughout the revolt. Cf. the chapters on the revolt in those counties; Powell and Réville, as above. The rebels did not desire to make him their captain and ruler of a fourth part of England, and they had no design of deposing Richard II., but sent envoys to purchase privileges of him. *Rotuli Congregationum Norwicensium*, 4 Richard II. (Bloomfield, *Hist. of Norfolk*, III. 108); Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, II. 6.

⁵ Powell, *East Anglia Rising*, 29, 31; Rogers's *Hist. of Agriculture*, I. 86-87. Cf. the more conservative criticism of Réville, *Soulèvement*, 103-104.

events. On June 17, not Corpus Christi, the insurgents of Norfolk assembled in camp at Mousehold heath, and were admitted into the city by consent of the council, which in order to placate them went so far as to give them a large sum of money.¹ They proceeded straightway to plunder the houses of Sir Robert de Salle and other of their chief opponents, and on the same day beheaded Sir Robert in their camp at Mousehold. His death was not a tumultuous combat, but conducted in an orderly manner, under legal forms,² probably under pretext of the King's permission granted at Mile End—"that they might take those who were traitors to him and slay them, wheresoever they might be found."³

Only the basic facts of the incident as recorded by Froissart are true, *viz.*, that the insurgents under command of Listere, which is the real form of the leader's name, assembled before Norwich and there slew Sir Robert de Salle. The details are wrong and may probably be accounted for by the fact that Froissart heard that this nobleman, whom he knew as a valiant knight in the French wars, had been ignobly slain by the insurgents before Norwich. It therefore behooved him, drawing partly on his knowledge, but more on his imagination, to provide his hero with a fitting apotheosis. Nor is this an unfair instance of his method, but one which has been chosen because other sources afford the means of safely controlling it.

Instances of this kind are by no means rare;⁴ we shall see two pertinent examples in his idealization of the young King's conduct at Mile End and Smithfield. The basic facts are often comparatively reliable, and may then be attributed to the notes which Froissart took from his informant, contemporary with the events he narrates. The details, however, are so influenced by his moral and rhetorical purposes, by his prejudice against the insurgents and idealization of chivalry that they are not to be depended upon, unless supported by more reliable testimony.⁵

¹ Powell, 27-28; Bloomfield, as above, III. 108, citing *Atlas*, 308.

² Cf. the indictments of Henry Roys, of Dilham and Adam Pulter. Powell, 132. They claimed a royal warrant for his execution.

³ Riley, *Memorials of London*, 449. Sir Robert had publicly condemned their actions. Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, II. 5-6.

⁴ A similar example is found in the account of the trials of Sire Jean Neuton, supposed captain of Rochester, whom the rebels pressed into service as envoy to the King (IX. 393, 395-396). Froissart probably confused him with Sir John Newton, the royal messenger to Tyler. Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, I. 463-464.

⁵ Other characteristics of Froissart's work must here be omitted as not having important bearing on the rising in 1381. His geographical knowledge does not prevent him from making errors of place in his account of the revolt. As a man of some military observation his description of armies and battles, and also his estimates of the numbers of forces are usually good. His chronology is often bad, but this is not so evident in our subject, in which no extensive chronological problems are involved.

II. AN ANONYMOUS FRENCH CHRONICLE OF THE REVOLT.

All students of the revolt owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Trevelyan for his publication in 1898 of a fragment of a chronicle originally found at St. Mary's, York, under the title of *An Account of the Rising in 1381*.¹ It is taken from the Stowe MS. 1047, in the British museum, and is in the handwriting of Stowe's friend Francis Thynne. Before this publication I had noted the wealth of information on the revolt in Stowe's *Chronicle* not traceable to his other sources of information, and had reconstructed the original in English from his narrative, ascribing it to some lost account, probably of London origin. The appearance of the original, with its greater wealth of detail, more than confirmed my opinion of its value, convincing me that this last is the most valuable of surviving contemporary accounts.

As will be seen from the title given by Thynne, *Oute of an anominalle cronicle belonginge to the abbey of St. Maries in Yorke*,² we have to do with the fragment of a longer work. The part preserved is concerned only with the rising in 1381. Neither Thynne nor Stowe gives us any clue to the character of the rest of the work or to its authorship, beyond the former's statement of its anonymity; in his *Chronicle* the latter cites the *Chronicle of St. Mary's, York*.³ Although written in French it is evidently the work of an Englishman, for there is a very large admixture of English words, and the idiom of the language is English. From the title given by Stowe we might infer a Northern origin, but the English words of the text do not, as far as I can see, disclose the dialect of the author. There is only one English passage of any length; *viz.* the watchword of the commons, "With whome haldes you," and the response, "With Kinge Richarde and the true comons."⁴ The form "haldes" is indeed Northern; but in this case we should expect "wham" instead of whome.

If the work had been written at St. Mary's, York, we should expect to hear something of the grave disturbances in Yorkshire of which we are reliably informed, and of the revolt in the north.⁵ But nothing of the kind appears. The events of Kent, Essex and London are the only ones narrated in detail. What occurred in London and the vicinity is as minutely and vividly described as one

¹ *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, XIII. 509-522.

² *Ibid.*, 509. "Anominalle" evidently means anonymous; in Thynne's *Animadversions*, (E. E. T. S., 1875), Introd., 89; we hear of "other anonymalle Chronicles."

³ Stowe, *Annales* (ed. 1631), 285.

⁴ *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, XIII. 513.

⁵ *Rot. Parl.*, III. 393; Rymer, *Foedera*, IV. 127, 135.

would expect from an eye-witness of the events. This is particularly true of the events about the King's person; for example, the negotiations for his proposed interview with the insurgents at Blackheath, the vivid description of the siege of the Tower, which is given from the point of view of an inmate of the fortress, the account of the events at Mile End and Smithfield.¹ The source of this information seems to have been some one who was in the following of the King—perhaps a courtier, cleric or lay. For French, in which (instead of the usual Latin) our chronicle was written, was used longer at court than in the country at large. True, the London events, being the most important, merit chief attention, but this will not explain the chronicler's silence in regard to the north, if he really wrote there. Consider how Leicester, where Knighton lived, figures in his account, and St. Alban's in Walsingham's.² True, it is not impossible that Thynne in copying for his friend Stowe omitted northern events, but this is rendered unlikely by the fact that he did copy the account of the revolt in Norfolk, Suffolk, Huntington and at Ramsey.³ The title *Chronicle of St. Mary's, York*, is therefore a misnomer, so far as the origin of the work is concerned, and I prefer to refer to the surviving fragment as the *Anonymous French Chronicle of the Revolt*.

Its date is indicated by a passage in which the author refers to the death of John Wrawe, leader of the Suffolk insurgents, an event that did not occur until the parliament which met in June, 1382.⁴ I do not think that he wrote long after this date, for in vividness and detail as well as reliability, he bears every mark of being a contemporary. His vividness is not like that of the rhetorician Froissart, but crude and native, resulting from a knowledge of facts. Compared with other chroniclers his account, though full of new matter, is usually confirmed by their less detailed versions. He seems to have made careful use of such documents as he could get, giving one in full and the substance of two others, probably derived from having heard them pronounced.⁵ One of these we are able to compare with an original; that is, in the case of the demands of the insurgents at Mile End, and we find it substantially correct.⁶

¹ Pp. 513–514, 516, 517, 518–519.

² In the *Historia Anglicana* more than half of the narrative, 36 of 71 pages, is devoted to the St. Alban's disturbances. Knighton, II. 142–143.

³ Pp. 521–522.

⁴ Eng. Hist. Rev., XIII. 521: “Sire Johne lauantdit, le Chieftaine, fust apres prist come traitor et amene a Londres, et foreuge a la morte; et fust trayne, bowelle, pendu et decolle.” For date of his execution see Réville, 156; Walsingham, *Hist. Engl.*, II. 63.

⁵ Eng. Hist. Rev., XIII., pp. 516, 517, 519.

⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 517 with Rymer, *Foedera*, 126.

The foregoing statements apply particularly to the author's account of the meeting at Mile End. The narrative is vivid, the actions and speeches of the King and the insurgents are recorded in detail, yet without theatrical effect. In reciting the articles granted he does not use the order found in the royal order of revocation, as one having this before him would have done;¹ and yet he gives them correctly. He adds to the list given on the *Revocation* other articles, the authenticity of which is proved in one important instance by the city record of the rebellion.² These deviations from the official account indicate clearly that the writer was not a copyist who had access to the documents, but, in all probability a man who had actually heard the articles pronounced at Mile End.

III. THE MONK OF Evesham's Chronicle.

The task of investigating the historical value of this work is the more difficult because of the antiquated character of the only published edition—that of Hearne in 1729—and the absence of recent research on the subject. As edited by Hearne it is taken from a manuscript of the Cotton library (*Tiberius C. ix. 1*), collated with another (*Claudius B. ix.*), of the same library.³ The text does not begin with the birth of Richard II., as we should expect of a biography, but with his accession in 1377, and ends not with his death in 1400, but with 1402. It treats the affairs of the kingdom in general, and not the actions of the King in particular. Richard is by no means the hero of the work, and wherever he is commented upon—only three times,—the comment is unfavorable.⁴ In fine, this is in no sense a biography, but a chronicle, and the generally accepted title *Vita Ricardi II* is a misnomer.

Luckily, there is still further evidence as to its character. The Harleian manuscript 2261 of the British museum is an English translation of Higden's *Polychronicon*, certainly made in the 15th century, and according to a surmise of the editor, between 1432 and 1450.⁵ Up to 1341 it follows the text of Higden, but in the middle

¹ As did, for example, the monk of Evesham, p. 32.

² Riley, *Memorials of London*, 445.

³ Mon. Evesham., XXIX. The account of the deposition of Richard II. contained in the *Tiberius MS.* and appended to the text is not an integral part of the *Vita*, but barring a brief introduction, is taken entirely from the Parliament roll of that year. *Ibid.*, 182–216; *Rot. Parl.*, II. 417–424. No conclusions as to the date and authorship of the *Vita* can be drawn from the account of Richard's deposition. This account is shown to be of late origin by a reference to the interment of Richard II. at Westminster, which took place under Henry V. (p. 183); the postscript in this MS., immediately following it, contains an error impossible to a contemporary, when it confounds Henry IV. with Edward IV. (p. 216).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 147, 156, 169–170.

⁵ *Ranulphi Higdeni Polychronicon* (R. S. '65), I. lxix; VIII. 428–518.

of that year it suddenly changes, following a new source.¹ The part of this continuation dealing with the years covered by the monk of Evesham,—1377–1402—is a literal translation of his work.² The other part of the *Continuation*, viz. 1341–1377, evidently forms an integral whole with the remainder, for the style and language are the same, and both parts bear the same relation to contemporary chroniclers. The Evesham chronicle, therefore, is a fragment of a Latin original used by the author of the Harleian MS. as a basis of his translation of a continuation of the *Polychronicon*. This Latin original was probably itself a continuation of that work, in which form we are told the so called *Vita Ricardi* most frequently appears.³

The relation of the monk of Evesham's work to the *Chronicon Angliae* and to Walsingham's *Historia Anglicana* has often been noticed, but never exactly determined.⁴ While this cannot be conclusively settled without comparison of all the manuscripts, we can nevertheless gain from the published sources a sufficiently clear idea to enable us to grapple with the problem of the authorship of the supposed *Vita Ricardi*.

With the exception of a few unimportant notices, the first three years of the *Vita* are taken from a source common to the *Historia* and the *Chronicon* in which the narrative was much fuller. This is less the case for 1380, while for 1381 the *Vita* is almost entirely independent.⁵ From 1382 there is an increasing use of the common source of the other two, especially from 1384 to 1387, where the verbal coincidence with the *Chronicon Angliae* is very marked.⁶ With 1387 the latter virtually closes, and in 1388–1389 the agreement of the *Vita* with the *Historia* is well-nigh verbal. This is also true for 1390, save that some additional matter is given.⁷ With 1391 all traces of agreement disappear, and where the same incidents are narrated they are seemingly from a different source.⁸

¹ *Ibid.*, VIII. 339, n. 10.

² The editor fails to notice this, and laboriously collates the text with Walsingham's *Historia Anglicana* and the *Chronicon Angliae*.

³ *Chron. Angliae*, XXXIII. n. 1.

⁴ Pauli, *Geschichte von England* (Gotha, 1855), IV. 729, who thinks its original was the *Hist. Angl.*; cf. the marginal references, *Polychronicon*, VIII. 729 ff.; *Chron. Angl.*, xxvi. xxxiii₆.

⁵ Mon. Evesham., 22–35; *Chr. Angl.*, 285 ff.; *Hist. Angl.*, I. 450 ff.

⁶ Mon. Evesham., 36–37, 41, 48; *Chr. Angl.*, 355, 357; for 1384–1387, Mon. Evesham., 56, 58–59, 63–65, 70–72, 72–79, 84–91, 97–98; *Chr. Angl.*, 361–362, 362–364, 365–367, 368–370, 370–376, 378–384, 386–387.

⁷ Mon. Evesham., 98–120; *Hist. Angl.*, II. 179–195; for additional matter in 1390, *ibid.*, 122–123.

⁸ E. g., the account of the Queen's death and of the King's journey to Ireland; as above, 125–126; II. 215–216.

From 1377 till 1390, therefore, the *Vita* agrees in the main with these sources, often with both, and in case of difference with one or the other. The tendency is to verbal agreement with the *Chronicon*, the *Historia* being generally more elaborate. As we already know that the former is copied mainly from a St. Alban's chronicle, which in an expurgated form is the basis of the latter,¹ it follows that the monk of Evesham used this same original, and that where not abbreviated he represents it more nearly than does Walsingham, who rewrote and improved.² Sometimes, indeed, when combining the narratives of both, he represents it more accurately than either.³ The *Chronicon Angliae* itself tells us, when referring us for further information in regard to the degradation of the cardinals by Pope Urban in 1385, that this original was brother Thomas Walsingham's *Chronica Majora Sancti Albani*.⁴

But although the *Chronica Majora* form the basis of the *Vita* to 1390, the monk of Evesham by no means confines himself to this source. He frequently adds notices of his own, particularly in connection with the monastery at Evesham or the Parliament,—two subjects in which he was particularly interested. His account of the sessions of Parliament is more extensive in proportion to the scope of his work than Walsingham's, and he frequently adds information not given by him.⁵ He evidently placed a high value on documents, not only incorporating those in the *Chronica Majora*, but adding from other sources. In one instance when enumerating the heresies and errors of Wycliffe he follows an official document instead of his usual authority, Walsingham.⁶

With the year 1391 the character of our chronicle suddenly changes. Up to this time the narrative was detailed, now it suddenly becomes very brief. The account for that year comprises hardly half a dozen lines,—a mere statement of the holding the Parliament, and of the result of the visit of a papal nuncio.⁷ The account of the following year does not occupy even a page of Hearne's text, and 1393, 1395 and 1396 require but little more, 1398 being

¹ *Chron. Angl.*, XXI. ff.

² Mon. Evesham., 71 ff.; *Chron. Angl.*, 369 ff.; *Hist. Angl.*, I. 144 ff.

³ As above, 70–71, 369, II. 143; or 74, 371, II. 146.

⁴ *Chron. Angl.*, 364. The specified information, unquestionably taken from this source, is found in *Hist. Angl.*, II. 122–123.

⁵ In 1385, for example, we receive additional information in regard to the Marquis of Dublin, and the treasure granted the new dukes; in 1390 about those incapable of receiving pardon and the taxation granted. The account of the Parliament of 1381 is based on a different source. Cf. Mon. Evesham., 66–67, 121–122, 34–35, with *Hist. Angl.*, II. 140–141, 195–196, 44–46.

⁶ Mon. Evesham., 37–40, identical with *Fasciculi Zizaniorum* (R.S. 1858), 275–282; cf. *Hist. Angl.*, II. 58–59.

⁷ P. 123 ff., for this and the years immediately following.

somewhat more detailed, though not so much so as the years preceding 1391. The events of 1397, however, are treated at great length, especially the proceedings of Parliament, which are taken from the Roll or some other journal.¹ The same is true of 1399, and until the end the narrative maintains this detailed character. The change in the character of the work with 1391 leads us to inquire whether a new author began with that year. It has been generally supposed that there was but one author, an unknown monk of Evesham. But M. Petit-Dutaillis has lately advanced the opinion that while a monk of Evesham may have written the latter part, the first is by another hand.² It is to be regretted that he does not support his opinion by the reasons which he doubtless had in mind.

The observations just made in regard to the changed character of the *Vita* with 1391, both as to the sudden transition from a detailed account to a mere narrative, and as to the cessation of the use of Walsingham from that date, at first sight speaks for this view. Furthermore the character and frequency of the references to Evesham certainly show that the author of the latter portion was a monk of this place. Without mentioning the name of the monastery he speaks of Evesham in 1401 as "*hoc monasterium*," and in 1395 he speaks of the presence of the King at the installation of the same bishop at Llandaff and then at Worcester as seeming "*mirable in oculis nostris*".³ In 1393 we hear of the death of Prior Nicolas of Evesham after a rule of forty years and one month; in 1399 of Henry IV.'s passage through the town, and in 1400 of a pestilence which raged with especial violence in the vale of Evesham. We are told that the King remained in the monastery two days in 1400 and three in 1401; during the latter year he visited there three times in one year,—an honor unheard of in the annals of the house.⁴

But unfortunately for M. Petit-Dutaillis's hypothesis we find an equally explicit reference to Evesham in the first part of the work. In 1384 the author gives a minute account, far longer than any of those mentioned above, of a difference between the Prior of Evesham and the Archbishop of Canterbury on occasion of the latter's visitation of the monastery. The incident is given in such detail (occupying two pages of the printed text) as could only be expected

¹ *Ibid.*, 131, 157; *Rot. Parl.*, II. 348, 416, for 1397 and 1399.

² Réville, *Soulèvement en 1381*, ix.

³ P. 127; p. 176: "Et hoc jam tertio manifestus est rex iste Henricus infra annum in hoc monasterio, quod non putatur aliquem regem fecisse a tempore fundationis usque in praesens."

⁴ Pp. 124, 152, 170, 173, 174; 176. Cf. the preceding note.

from a monk of the abbey.¹ Besides this, there occur certain characteristics both before and after 1391 which point to a single author for the entire work. We noticed above the importance ascribed to Parliaments in the first part of the work. This is much more the case in the latter part, where the greater portions of the narratives for 1397 and 1399 are taken directly from the Parliament Rolls. The chronicler's fondness for documents continues throughout the work, even if we except the documents derived from Walsingham.²

The same author, therefore, a monk of Evesham, wrote the entire work. His independent part began with 1391, and the brief and incomplete character of the account during the years following can be best explained by the supposition that he wrote from memory. Even his long account of 1397 is certainly not contemporary, but derived from a Parliament Roll; for in speaking of the murder of the Duke of Gloucester he promises to tell of it in its proper place, which is not done till 1399.³ The account of this latter year is detailed and valuable, and, making allowances for what in 1399 is copied from the Parliament Roll, the same detailed character prevails throughout the remaining narrative. Beginning with the reign of Henry IV. the author writes as one would expect from a contemporary residing at Evesham. The struggle with the neighboring Welsh occupies his chief attention,⁴ and the repeated times that Henry IV. stopped at the monastery on his way to and from these wars may explain the origin of the chronicle.⁵ Why should it not have been written in some relation to these royal visits? It is certainly as favorable to the King as it is opposed to his predecessor, with whose deposition it is in hearty sympathy. Contrast the reflections on Richard's cupidity and extravagance, and the unfavorable estimate of his character, with the commendation of Henry IV., "*pius et misericors et generosus.*"⁶ If the narrative did not break off suddenly in the middle of the reign of Henry IV., we should probably hear even greater eulogies of this prince.

The account of the revolt in 1381 given by the monk of Evesham is consequently in no wise contemporary. He indeed had access to the *Chronica Majora*, for both accounts contain some remarks on the designs of the rebels and the reputed confession of

¹ Pp. 53-55.

² Pp. 28, 38-40, 134-135, 143 (articles of treason), 157-159, 160.

³ P. 130. "Ut infra loco suo plenius diceretur." In 1399 he relates the incident, stating that he had spoken of it above, "supra enim narratur." P. 161.

⁴ Pp. 171-179, 182.

⁵ Pp. 173, 174, 176.

⁶ Pp. 147, 156, 169-170, 165. He has also omitted the passages detrimental to John of Gaunt, contained in the *Chronica Majora* and preserved in the *Chron. Angliae*, 195-196, 199-200, 205, 210-211.

Jack Straw;¹ but with this exception their narratives differ entirely. The Evesham narrative is independent of all the other chronicles. The question therefore arises whether this independent part is due to the author himself, and consequently the mere personal opinion of a monk in a western priory, or whether it was derived from an older source. The latter seems probable from the nature of the account, which, save for brief references to Norfolk, Suffolk and Huntingdon,² confines itself exclusively to the events in and about London. In striking contrast to other contemporary chronicles, which give minute local descriptions,³ there is not a word about the revolt in the west country, where Evesham lay, although we have reason to believe that disturbances occurred there.⁴ The original then seems to have been a London source, and as such is more reliable for London events than the work of a monk in a distant western monastery. The time which we have assigned for the origin of the whole work—the beginning of the reign of Henry IV.—makes it likely that this original source, like the others used, was contemporary.

In our examination of his relation to the *Chronica Majora* we have already seen how the monk of Evesham uses his sources, either abbreviating or else copying verbatim, sometimes indeed omitting parts of the original, but never distorting it. There are interesting and characteristic examples in the account of the revolt. The remarks on the designs of the insurgents terminating in the reputed confession of Jack Straw, agree almost verbally with those of the *Chronica Angliae* and the *Historia Anglicana*, and are certainly taken from a common original.⁵ The enumeration in this chronicle of the demands of the insurgents at Mile End agrees entirely in substance and almost verbally with the record in the revocation of pardons.⁶ We may therefore assume that this account of the revolt, and certainly the part relating to Mile End, is worthy of belief.

Of the remaining chronicles which notice the meeting at Mile End, Malverne's continuation of Higden and the continuor of Knighton, add almost nothing to our knowledge. Adam of Usk,⁷ however, a contemporary lawyer who wrote after the accession of Henry IV., throws a little light on the articles conceded the in-

¹ Pp. 31–32.

² P. 30.

³ Above, 21, n. 1.

⁴ Cf. map, Trevelyan, *Age of Wycliffe*, 254.

⁵ Mon. Evesham, 31–32; *Chron. Angl.*, 308–310; *Hist. Angl.*, II. 8–10.

⁶ Mon. Evesham, 517; Rymer, *Foedera* (ed. 1869), IV. 126.

⁷ Malverne, John, *Chronicon*, ed. J. R. Lumby in *Polychronicon, Ranulphi Higden, Vol. IX.*, R. S., 1886; *Chronicon Henrici Knighton vel Critthon, monachi Leycestrensis*, ed. J. R. Lumby, R. S., 1889–1895.

surgents.¹ Four of these articles are recorded in the royal order by which they were afterwards revoked, while the official² city record of the insurrection, a document issued just after the revolt to justify the action of the mayor and his adherents, gives another article not contained in the revocation.³

IV. THE KING AND THE PEOPLE AT MILE END.

Let us now proceed to examine the actual occurrences at Mile End, beginning with a brief consideration of the events that led up to the meeting of the King with the insurgents, in order that we may see how it came to take place and what its object was.

On Corpus Christi day, Thursday, June 13, the insurgents by aid of their civic allies entered London. The chief division of their Southern army, which had encamped at Blackheath, straightway invested the Tower, where the King, his council and a large number of the nobility and gentry had taken refuge. Although this fortress was defended by an adequate garrison which, aided by the refugees, might have offered stout resistance, the inmates could not be depended upon, owing to the panic among them.⁴ Besides, the rebels were constantly reinforced by fresh hordes hurrying on London, and had on that afternoon intercepted the stock of provisions intended for the Tower.⁵

Who directed the course of government during this crisis? The royal council, frequently mentioned in the sources, was much reinforced by members of the nobility who had taken refuge in the Tower, but its vote was advisory in character. The governing power had heretofore been the ministers and the more intimate circle of advisers composing the privy council. During the minority of Richard II. this body had become practically a council of regency.⁶ Among its most influential members were John of Gaunt, then absent on an embassy to Scotland, Simon of Sudbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, the chancellor, and Sir Robert Hales, the treasurer. These the rebels held chiefly responsible for existing misgovernment. Although the chancellor and treasurer had up to

¹ *Chronicon Adae de Usk*, ed. Edward Maunde Thompson. Royal Society of Literature, 1876.

² Rymer, *Foedera* (rev. Caley and Holbrooke. Record Commission, 1869), IV. 126.

³ Riley, H. T., *Memorials of London* (London, 1868), pp. 449-451.

⁴ *An. Fr. Chr.*, 516, bis; Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, I. 458; Mon. Evesham, 26. According to Walsingham the garrison consisted of 600 men-at-arms and a like number of archers.

⁵ Walsingham, as above.

⁶ Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* (5th ed.), III. 254.

this directed the royal policy¹ in regard to the insurgents, the former had on the preceding day resigned his office,² while retaining his place as adviser to the King. But as they, along with most of the remaining ministry, and the chief justices, were prescribed by the insurgents,³ they could not continue to direct the affairs of state, if the demands of the latter were to be met.

In reading the account of the *Anonymous French Chronicle* we are struck by the prominent part taken by the young King in the councils held in the Tower.⁴ While this is partly to be attributed to medieval parlance,⁵ and, perhaps, to the desire of the councillors by thrusting the King prominently forward to shield themselves, it may also indicate unaccustomed activity on his part, probably with the desire to save his friends. Still, it is hardly likely that the lad of fifteen years suddenly took the government into his own hands, only to relinquish it as soon as the revolt was over.⁶ His conduct was more probably directed by the experienced members of the royal council which surrounded him. Possibly his mother, the Princess of Wales, had much influence upon him.⁷

The important question now before the council was, whether they should yield to the demand of the insurgents that the King in person come and hear their grievances. This is what the insurgents had demanded on the previous day; and the council had agreed to an interview on the morning of Corpus Christi, but terrified at the threatening attitude of the insurgents had hurried the King back to London. Such an interview of course meant acquiescence in their requirements for the execution of the councillors and radical economic reform, for it would have placed the King completely in their power. The council was therefore divided in opinion. According to the generally accepted account of Froissart, one party, led by William Walworthe, mayor of London, advocated a night attack on the insurgents by the combined forces of the Tower and the

¹ *Eulogium Historiarum* (Rolls Series), III. 352; Malverne, 2-3; Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, I. 456.

² Rymer, *Foedera*, IV. 122.

³ On the same morning the insurgents demanded the heads of fifteen lords and gentlemen, fourteen of whom were present in the Tower. Among these were John of Gaunt, the chancellor, the treasurer, the clerk of the privy seal, two of the chief justices (*An. Fr. Chr.*, 513). Sir John Cavendish, the other chief justice, was killed by the rebels of Suffolk.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 516.

⁵ All acts of government are supposedly performed by the King. If the council meets, he calls a council; its decisions are the King's.

⁶ Before, as after the revolt till his 23rd year, he was content to remain in tutelage.

⁷ He was placed under her care at his accession in 1377; Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* (4th ed.), II. 462. We know that she was with him during the whole crisis and accompanied him to Mile End.

King's adherents in the city, while another, under William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, was for conciliation. But we have already seen that the details of Froissart's narrative cannot be safely accepted without confirmation of more reliable sources, and this is not forthcoming.¹

Coupled with their summons the insurgents now made threats of an ominous nature. According to a reliable authority their message was that if the King did not speedily come into their presence they would immediately destroy the Tower, nor should he escape alive.² In the determinative session of the council that followed, the members are represented as having been at a loss what to do—quite naturally so, in deciding the matter of losing their own heads—the young King himself making the decision, which was to grant the demands of the interview; for he cherished the forlorn hope that all the besiegers of the Tower would leave, and give their intended victims a chance to escape.³ The mayor of London was therefore instructed to have the sheriffs and aldermen proclaim in the wards that all persons between the ages of fifteen and sixty should on the morrow at noon assemble to meet the King at Mile End. This decision was probably reached in the evening of Corpus Christi.⁴

It seems likely that even before this decision⁵ an attempt had been made by an interview with the King and by promises from the

¹ Froissart, IX. 401–402. According to John Malverne (pp. 2–3), Sudbury and Hales, not Walworthe, still headed the party that was opposed to conciliation. If Salisbury headed the other party and played such an important part as Froissart here and elsewhere assigns him (IX. 398–399), it is surprising that his name is mentioned only a single time in the detailed accounts of the chroniclers and in the numerous documents on the revolt, *viz.*, in the anonymous French account, where we are told that he was in London on 12th June (*ibid.*, 513); Froissart's knowledge of Walworthe's important part in subduing the rebellion, and of Salisbury's reputation as a soldier in France and as English commissioner for the treaty of Bretigny, may have caused his error.

² Mon. Evesham., 27. “Quod sine mora ad eos inermis; quod nisi celeriter adimpleret, turrim ipsam statim diruerent, nec ipse vivus evaderet.” This threat is confirmed by Walsingham, *Hist. Engl.*, I. 458; Malverne, 3. Although the monk of Evesham tells us that it was made on the following day from Mile End, he also relates that the interview was conceded in consequence. As we know from other sources that the decision to yield was not reached on the 14th, but on the 13th (*An. Fr. Chr.*, 516; Froissart, IX. 402), it seems likely that he refers to the ultimatum of the rebels on the latter day.

³ *An. Fr. Chr.*, 516.

⁴ Froissart, IX. 401, assumes that it was in the evening. Allowing time for the King's journey to and from Greenwich, the insurgents' march from Blackheath to London, and the preceding negotiations, his assumption seems likely, although we hear from the *An. Fr. Chr.*, 514, that the King had returned to the Tower by 9 a. m.

⁵ The *Anonymous Chronicle* records it after the council meeting, but without stating that it followed in point of time. It appears to me a last attempt to conciliate and avoid making a complete surrender.

Tower, to induce the insurgents to disperse. Mounting a turret on the east side, nearest St. Catherine's, where the chief body lay, the young King had exhorted them to retire peacefully to their homes, promising to pardon all their trespasses. The answer came back, amidst great clamor, that they would never leave until they had secured the traitors in the Tower, until he had conceded them freedom from all manner of serfdom and other points which they would demand. Richard made a great show of granting these requests. In their sight he caused a charter to be drawn up and sealed it himself; two knights bore it down to the insurgents, and one of them mounting an old chair, read aloud to the following intent : "The King thanks his good commons for their loyalty, and pardons all their illegal offenses ; but he wishes everyone to return home and set down his grievances in writing, and send it to him. By the advice of his lords and council he will then provide such remedy as will be profitable to himself, his commons and the whole realm."¹ But the people shouted that this was nothing but trifles and a mockery. Some even rushed through the streets demanding that every lawyer or person able to make such writs or write letters be beheaded.

The night that followed must have been a terrible one for the inmates of the Tower. They saw the flaming houses of those whom the insurgents hated, their own perhaps among them, in and about the city ; their ears were dinned with the clamor of the besiegers, crying as if "tout li diable, d'enfer fuissent entre yaulx."² Gloomy indeed must have been their forebodings for the morrow.

Mile End, the appointed meeting place of the King with his rebellious subjects, was then a village in the midst of a fine meadow, where the Londoners were wont to recreate on holidays.³ Because this had been the assembly place of the men of Essex who took part in the revolt, it has been generally assumed that it was chiefly these with whom the King treated on June 14.⁴ As a matter of fact it was the entire insurgent army.⁵ This was the largest number

¹ The original document of which the above is a condensation, is preserved in the *Anonymous Chronicle*, 516.

² Froissart, as above. Cf. the vivid description of *An. Fr. Chr.*, 515-516.

³ Froissart, IX. 404. His long residence in London lends weight to this statement.

⁴ Although Walsingham alone among the sources makes this statement (*Hist. Angl.*, I. 462-463), it is accepted by Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* (4th ed.), II. 400; Green, *Hist. Eng. People*, I. 473; Réville, 30, 41.

⁵ The language of the official city record is conclusive on this point : "All the men of Kent and Essex, . . . together with some of the perfidious persons of the city aforesaid." Riley, *Memorials of London*, 449. Such was also the understanding of the *An. Fr. Chr.*, 516-517, and the monk of Evesham, 27-28, who nowhere mention the Essex men in particular, but have the King treat with all the insurgents ; of Froissart who refers to a number of counties (IX. 405), and of the revocation of pardons (Rymer, *Foedera*, IV. 126).

of insurgents at any one time assembled in 1381, and Froissart's estimate of over 60,000 men seems by no means exaggerated.¹ While most of them came from the home counties, especially from Kent and Essex, there were contingents from greater distances, and representatives from as far away as Somerset and Oxford.²

In strange confidence the besiegers left only fourscore men to guard the Tower with its strong garrison; but other bands of rebels, which from all sides were hurrying on London, constantly arrived. Royal messengers urged them as they arrived to proceed to Mile End, promising that the King would soon follow.³ Meanwhile the King was urging the intended victims of the insurgents to steal through the small watergate of the Tower and escape by boat; but none, excepting the Archbishop, had the courage to make the attempt⁴. He was unfortunately recognized by a woman, who sounded the alarm, and the prelate retired in confusion to the Tower.

A considerable retinue accompanied the King to Mile End.⁵ Sir Aubrey de Vere, his swordbearer, preceded. Richard was followed by his mother, the Princess of Wales, in her chariot, by the lord constable (Buckingham), the Earls of Kent, Warwick and Oxford, Sir Thomas Percy, Sir Robert Knowles, the mayor of London, besides other knights, esquires and citizens on horseback.⁶ According to Froissart three faithful foreign peers, *viz.*, Robert de Namur, the Lords of Vertain (Hainault) and Gommegnies (Flanders), rode forth with the King.⁷ A crowd of insurgents followed. Though little more than a mile, the journey was not without peril. On

¹ *Chroniques*, IX. 404. Froissart's military experience and knowledge make his estimates of numbers quite valuable. Other sources are more exaggerated. Thus, *An. Fr. Chr.*—“A tres hideous poure, al nombre de C. M. et plusors.” See also Riley, *Memorials*, 449: “Whose numbers were in all past reckoning.”

² *Rot. Parl.*, III. 106 (for Somerset); *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1381, p. 16 (for Oxford). Besides the home counties, Froissart (IX. 405) mentions people of Sussex, Bedford, Cambridge, Stafford, and Lynn; but such details of his are usually unreliable.

³ *An. Fr. Chr.*, 517.

⁴ The chronicle just cited attributes their refusal to want of courage; Knighton (II. 133) states this even more strongly. They may, however, have mistrusted the King's plan of escape—an opinion justified by the failure of the Archbishop's attempt, and by the circumstance that of the lords and gentlemen mentioned as prescribed by the rebels (*An. Fr. Chr.*, 513), all except the chancellor and treasurer afterwards escaped.

⁵ Riley, *Memorials*, 449. This document, confirmed by the anonymous chronicle, and Froissart, is to be preferred to the monk of Evesham, who describes the King's retinue as small. *Ibid.*, 27.

⁶ *An. Fr. Chr.*, 517.

⁷ *Chroniques*, IX. 405. On these foreign peers he was likely well informed from his Belgian sources. He adds the Earl of Salisbury to the above list, and relates how the King's two half-brothers, the Earl of Kent and Sir John Holland, stole away from the train on the road to Mile End.

Tower hill an insurgent leader, Thomas Faringdon of London, seized the bridle of the King's horse, demanding justice against the lord treasurer, who, he claimed, had robbed him of tenements in Essex. His sovereign assented to this petition.¹ Other altercations between the King's train and the people took place on the road.² At one o'clock in the afternoon,³ the hour appointed for the meeting, they arrived at Mile End.

Now as to the actual occurrences at Mile End. Our investigations have shown that Froissart's account is unreliable in detail, but that both the monk of Evesham and the anonymous French chronicler are trustworthy. We must therefore prefer the monk's account of Richard's conduct to the traditional ideas derived from Froissart. According to the former he rode timidly to the place of meeting; he is aptly compared to a lamb among wolves, and we are told that he appealed in a supplicating manner to the people standing about.⁴ This version of the subject, though perhaps exaggerated by the chronicler, is more like what we would expect of a lad of fifteen years, of the retiring disposition and rather timid character of Richard II.

The details given by the anonymous French chronicler are also

¹ *Coram Rege rolls*, publ. by Réville, 195, 204. Faringdon threatened in case justice was refused him to re-enter and hold his tenements by force.

² Thus William Treweman, a London brewer, in like manner accosted Nicholas Brembre, near Aldgate, reproaching him with injuries inflicted when the latter was mayor. *Coram Rege rolls*, Réville, 207.

³ *An. Fr. Chr.*, 516-517. The "vij del knolle," according to general medieval usages, is the seventh canonical hour, 1 p. m., and not 7 a. m. This interpretation is confirmed by the following circumstances: (1) On the same morning the chief division of the Essex men, under Jack Straw, their captain, had destroyed Highbury, an extensive manor two leagues north of London (Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, I. 458). This division was certainly at Mile End (Riley, *Memorials*, 449; Froissart, IX. 405), which under these circumstances they could not have reached by 7 a. m. (2) The insurgents from St. Alban's had on that morning marched to London by the roundabout way of Barnet (about 25 miles), had stopped at Highbury long enough to take the oath of allegiance to the rebellion before Jack Straw, and at London to take counsel in the church of St. Mary of the Bows (*Ibid.*, 454, 467-468); yet they arrived in time for the meeting at Mile End. That they were actually there is indicated by the circumstance that we afterwards find them in possession of one of the royal pennons distributed at Mile End (*Ibid.*, 472); we also hear that their leader obtained from the King in person "*coram turba*" a grant of their demands (*Ibid.*, 468), which probably refers to the multitude at Mile End. Such a feat of marching could not have been performed between matins, directly after which they started from St. Alban's (*Ibid.*, 458), and 7 a. m. (3) The Earl of Warwick, who was hearing mass at Barnet when the insurgents of St. Alban's passed (not before 10 a. m., since Barnet is about 20 miles from St. Alban's by the road) accompanied the King to Mile End (*Ibid.*, 458; *An. Fr. Chr.*, 517). From all these circumstances it is evident that 1 p. m. is the time meant.

⁴ Mon. Evesham, 27. "Versus eos valde timidus equitavit . . . Cum dominus rex ad praedictum locum . . . venisset quasi agnus inter lupos apparuit, quippe qui de vita sua plurimum formidabat; populum circumstantem supplice adoravit."

to be accepted. We hear that when the royal train arrived at Mile End, the commons received the King on bended knees: "Welcome, our Lord King Richard, an it please you; we desire no other King than you."¹ They were drawn up in battle array, with two great standards of St. George, banners and pennants flying before them. Walter Tyler, their spokesman, then addressed the King, insisting on two points: (1) That they might take those who were traitors to the King throughout England and put them to death, and that (2) the King grant the petitions they were about to present him, which, it seems, had been previously drawn up in writing. The King asked what their petitions were, and when Tyler enumerated them, granted every article. He then had the insurgents drawn up in two great ranks and these concessions proclaimed to them.

To these details the monk of Evesham makes further additions. We are told that the people presented their petitions through a delegation selected for this purpose, demanding confirmation by royal letters patent.² This statement is not at variance with the account just considered, as Tyler was the spokesman of the delegation. It is probable that in all important actions he had at his side a council of this nature, in which such men as John Ball, Jack Straw and other chief leaders took part. Furthermore, the chief demands of the insurgents were confirmed by just such letters patent.³ The same chronicler goes on to relate that the populace declared the King should not leave their presence until he had made this confirmation, a point well understood by both King and council.⁴ At all events, the required letters patent were solemnly promised in presence of the multitude, and the King, having obtained permission of the insurgents,⁵ retired, followed by his train. He proceeded to the Queen's wardrobe in the Tower Royal, after the Tower the strongest fortress in London.⁶

Two of the articles granted the insurgents at Mile End are preserved in the letters patent conceding them to Hertfordshire; these with two more survive in the royal order by which they were afterwards revoked, while four others are preserved by the chroniclers and the city memorial of the insurrection.⁷ The four articles pre-

¹ *An. Fr. Chr.*, 517.

² Mon. Evesham, 27–28.

³ It is so stated in the revocation of pardons. Rymer, IV. 126. See also the charter sent to Hertfordshire, Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, I. 467; Mon. Evesham, 28.

⁴ The King afterwards stated that he was forced to make these concessions; this statement was reiterated by the Parliament of November, 1381. *Rot. Parl.*, II. 99, 100.

⁵ Mon. Evesham, 28. "Ab eis licentia petita." Froissart, IX. 406.

⁶ Riley, *Memorials*, 450; Froissart, as above.

⁷ All these will be cited in course of their enumeration in the narrative.

served by the Revocation are well known, while the others, with a single exception, have heretofore been unnoticed. All of them are important as showing the character of the revolt and the objects which it strove to attain.

The first provision mentioned in the Revocation and in the letter for Hertfordshire abolishes serfdom in England.¹ The King manumits his subjects and frees them from all manner of bondage and servitude. Manumission frees the person of the serf, who is no longer bound to the soil or subject to tallage at his lord's will, but has full legal rights against him. The article goes on to abolish all forms of servile labor,² whether it be week work, harvest work or any other, rendered by freeman or by serf. Since the pestilence of 1349 had raised wages and lowered rents, such labor services were felt more keenly than before by the peasants, who on their return home everywhere withdrew them.³

In the second article the King pardons all rebellion and other offenses committed by the insurgents, all outlawry they may have incurred and extends his peace to all.⁴

The third article concedes to the manumitted serfs the right to buy and sell free of toll in all cities, boroughs, market-vills and other places.⁵ This concession is in reality included in the first article mentioned, since all freemen possessed this right. It is a distinct blow at the manorial system, which prohibited the serf from trading outside of the manor, except by special license of the lord. It is not, however, directed against the tolls and privileges of the cities and towns, since their⁶ charters, containing monopolies of trade, having been issued before, would exclude this grant. There is no complaint against the municipal economy of the period, as such, among the rebels of 1381; they had no quarrel with the craft gilds of the cities or the city governments. Indeed, one of the most powerful crafts of London, the fishmongers, and several cities like Canterbury and Bury St. Edmunds were in open alliance with the insurgents.

¹ Rymer, IV. 126. "Quod . . . universos ligeos et subditos nostros, communes et alios, certorum comitatum regni nostri manumisimus, et ipsos et eorum quilibet ab omni bondagio et servitio eximus et quietos fecimus," cf. Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, I. 467 (pardon for Herts); Mon. Evesham., 28. I cite the *Revocation*, which is also preserved by Walsingham (*Hist. Angl.*, II. 20-22), as giving the general form of the articles; the pardon for Herts gives a form adapted to that country. The variations are slight and unimportant.

² This interpretation is confirmed by Adam of Usk, a contemporary lawyer; *Chronicon*, 2.

³ Rymer, IV. 126 (bis.); *Archaeologica Cantiana*, II. 71-72; Mon. Evesham, 32.

⁴ Rymer, as above. Cf. *Hist. Angl.*, as above, where the wording is a little different, and the résumé in Mon. Evesham, as above.

⁵ Rymer, IV. 126. Cf. Mon. Evesham, as above.

⁶ This is the supposition of Petit-Dutaillis. Réville, LXXXVIII.

The fourth article provides for a maximum land rent of four pence the acre from lands thus freed from villenage, but the rent of no land previously held for less shall be raised in consequence of this provision.¹ This is in line with the usual medieval ideas of regulating prices. The peasants might justly reason that if Parliament could lower wages and the craft guilds could raise prices, they might limit rents. As might be expected under the circumstances, they fixed a low maximum. Some land in England rented as high as two shillings the acre, and sixpence was quite a common price.²

The four demands just enumerated are the only ones mentioned in the Revocation. All other sources describing the events at Mile End, however, are agreed that further concessions were made. Their omission in the Revocation may be best accounted for by the fact that, as they were of a political nature, they required no formal revocation, a disavowal being sufficient.³ This is true of all excepting one, the demand for the repeal of the statutes of laborers. In the disturbed state of the country at this time, the council would hardly have attempted to enforce this labor legislation, and any mention of it would have been inopportune. This demand for its repeal was one of whose existence I was convinced before this became evident from a passage in Stowe's invaluable source.⁴ Considering the importance of the statutes of laborers in bringing on the revolt, it certainly seemed unlikely that the rebels would have neglected such an opportunity for their annulment.

This is not the place for a detailed discussion of these well known laws; I hope to examine that subject in another paper and show how this legislation brought on the revolt. Suffice it here to say that the statutes were not chiefly aimed, as has been usually supposed, against a separate class of agricultural laborers, but against any person who at any time worked for hire. They therefore affected the lower classes of the kingdom, the lesser craftsmen and journeymen of the towns as well as villains, cotters and copy-holders in the country. The insurgents of 1381 attempted to provide a remedy for such compulsory determination of wages by the provision that henceforward no man should serve another but of his own free will and for wages by mutual agreement.⁵

¹ Rymer, as above. Mon. Evesham, as above.

² Denton, *England in 15th Century*, 147; Rogers, *Agriculture and Prices*, IV. 126.

³ The political offenses committed by the insurgents were repeatedly disavowed. Rymer, IV. 125, 126, 127; Réville, 286-287.

⁴ This was surmised in 1859 by G. Bergenroth, but without any proof. *Hist. Zeitschrift*, II. 79.

⁵ *An. Fr. Chr.*, 517. "Che nul ne deveroit servire ascune home, mes a sa volonte de mesme et par couenant taille."

As might be expected, the political demands of the commons are radical in the extreme. The fruits of the aggressive English policy in France were now being reaped in the shape of military disaster and heavy taxes, a fact brought vividly home to the people by the poll-tax of 1380. While it is probably true that much of this was due to the mismanagement of John of Gaunt and the party in power, it is doubtful if their opponents could have done any better. But in the popular conception of the Middle Ages—and this opinion was shared by the House of Commons—an unsuccessful minister was usually a traitor.

The insurgents had therefore on the previous day demanded the heads of most of the King's chief advisers, including the ministry,—fifteen lords and gentlemen in all. Among these were the chancellor just retired, Sir Robert Hales, the treasurer, Sir John Fordham, clerk of the privy seal, and two chief justices, Sir Robert Belknap, of the common pleas, and Sir Robert Plesynstone, chief baron of the exchequer, to say nothing of John of Gaunt, Bishop Courtenay of London, Sir Ralph Ferrers and others.¹ Stretching the term traitor to all who oppressed them or opposed their revolt, they demanded a far-reaching punishment.

Contemporaries differ as to the terms of the grant. According to the official city record the King conceded the insurgents' demands without qualification: "That they might take those who were traitors against him and slay them, wheresoever they might be found."² The anonymous French chronicler, on the other hand, records that his answer was qualified by the condition that the accused be legally convicted of treason.³ In this instance I prefer to follow the city record, considering the fact that the King was entirely at the mercy of the insurgents, who certainly would not have been satisfied thus to leave the matter to their chief enemies, the lawyers. This was certainly the understanding of the insurgents (who, by virtue of this grant, straightway proceeded to the Tower to kill the chancellor and his companions),⁴ as well as of the garrison who admitted them.

As a corollary to the provision for the punishment of a hostile ministry, the King acknowledged the insurgents' claim that he had heretofore been ill led and governed, and promised that henceforth he would be directed by them.⁵ In this grant we find the political

¹ *Ibid.*, 513.

² Riley, *Memorials*, 449.

³ *An. Fr. Chr.*, 517.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 517. "Par celle grant le dit Wat Tighler et les comons pristeront lour voy a le toure pur prendre lercheuesque." Riley, 449.

⁵ Mon. Evesham, 28.

ideal of the insurgents,—a popular absolute monarchy, ruled by advice of the common people. Not a word is said about Parliament and its rights, which are ignored in all of the articles. The rights of the landlords of Parliament over their villains is annulled without their consent, their property is confiscated by the radical reduction of rent. Laws which they had enacted are set aside, innocent men are hurried to death without legal trial by their peers. All these were infractions on the fundamental rights of Parliament, to which the common people no longer looked for redress or relief. By its persistence in legislation hostile to the lower classes since the first statute of laborers, in 1349, Parliament had completely estranged them; the King was their only hope.

Adam of Usk, a contemporary lawyer, records another concession at Mile End not noticed elsewhere, *viz.*, the liberation of all prisoners.¹ At this time the prisons were filled with the victims of the statutes of laborers and other repressive legislation since 1349, and it is to this circumstance, rather than to any sympathy with crime on part of the insurgents, that this demand is to be attributed.

Such were the articles granted the insurgents at Mile End. They were of course extorted, and there was no intention on part of the authorities to carry them out; such, indeed, would have been a legal impossibility. For how could the King legally dispose of the rights and property of his people without the consent of Parliament, annul laws which it had formally enacted, or decree the execution of men without legal trial? Of course, the council intended to have him disavow these concessions as soon as safety would allow. For the present they proceeded with great caution. As a pledge of the King's sincerity, royal banners and pennons were distributed among the different rebel bands,² and the articles granted were proclaimed in all the shires of England.³

It would be fruitless to speculate on the possible results had the economic demands of the peasants been enforced. I am not so sure that the suppression of the revolt, in this regard at least, was for the unquestioned good of the nation.⁴ The result of these reforms would have further weakened the landlords and emancipated the peasantry, with the possible result of a landlord system in which peasant proprietorship would have been the prevailing feature,—a

¹ “Rex concessit . . . omnes incarceratedos liberari.” *Chron. Adae de Usk*, 2.

² Rymer, *Foedera*, IV. 126; Froissart, IX. 405.

³ “Hoc ubique in regni comitatibus publice mandavit et fecit proclamari.” *Chron. Adae de Usk*, 2.

⁴ Such is the prevailing opinion. Powell, *East Anglia Rising*, 66; Trevelyan, *Age of Wycliffe*, 255.

state of affairs which many prominent English politicians and economists since Arthur Young have been trying to bring about.

The demands of the insurgents also afford valuable information on the character and causes of the insurrection. We know from other sources that it was very complex in nature, a union of most of the elements discontented with the social order. The lower classes of the towns, in several cases the town governments, were important factors; moreover a general uprising against the monasteries took place in connection with the revolt. But from these demands extorted by the insurgents at the zenith of their power it is evident that the most important factor, the backbone of the movement, was an uprising against serfdom and servile labor; it is the villain who benefits chiefly from the concession at Mile End. True, the free peasant was not forgotten, for he too rendered labor services, sometimes such as were servile by nature, and was oppressed by the statutes of laborers. He felt more keenly than did the villain the political abuses of the day, since he had some share in the government. But except in so far as he might be benefited by the repeal of the statutes of laborers, the townsman receives no consideration in these articles. From this alone, if we had no other evidence, we should know that the political and economic aspirations of the peasantry of England constituted the chief factors of the revolt in 1381.

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